



**Community Assets & Opens Spaces Committee
Wednesday 20 May 2026**

Agenda Item 9 – Proposal for Action to Tackle Dog Fouling

Purpose of the Report

Members are required to:

- **NOTE** the problem of dog fouling in Wroughton and Wichelstowe
- **NOTE** the current body of evidence around dog owner behaviour, and best practice to deliver behaviour change communications campaigns
- **CONSIDER** the recommendation to ask the Deputy Clerk to prepare a communications campaign for approval at the next meeting of the Community Assets and Open Spaces Committee.

Introduction

Dog fouling is a recurring problem throughout Wroughton and Wichelstowe. Residents routinely report instances of dog fouling to the parish council and frequently discuss the issue on social media.

Dog fouling can pose serious environmental health risks and makes parks, pavements and shared spaces less enjoyable. It causes problems for the parish's numerous outdoor sports teams and can create tension between dog owners and others.

Considering the high prevalence of dog fouling in the parish, the council is keen to explore how it might best be tackled.

Background

At its meeting on Monday 15 April 2024, the parish council AGREED that:

- A new 'Dogs on Leads' policy be adopted on marked playing pitches and children's play areas only.
- The main entrances to all the parish's open spaces be clearly marked on maps and plans by the Groundsteam.
- Locations be identified and wording drafted for signs to be installed in all public open spaces.
- A week of social media posts be published to alert residents to review the policy and explain the reasons why this is now in place within the parish.

Since then, anecdotal evidence suggests that dog fouling has continued to be a problem.

The Law

There is no nationwide law on dog fouling in England, but local authorities have powers to introduce Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) to designated areas where people can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for leaving dog waste behind. Local authorities can also issue Community Protection Notices (CPNs) to persistent offenders, which can prevent them from visiting specific areas.

Swindon Borough Council (SBC) has a facility to allow members of the public to report instances of dog fouling. SBC can patrol affected areas and affix warning stickers to street furniture. If anyone is seen committing an offence by leaving their dog's faeces on the floor, they may receive a fixed penalty notice from SBC. If they do not pay the fine within the required timescale, they may be taken to court and be hit with a fine up to £1,000.

Examples from Other Local Authorities

Other district and parish councils from across the country have tried different methods to tackle dog fouling. Here are some case studies from other authorities (click the link in the title for more information):

1. Cumberland Council's Operation TURD

TURD stands for Together United for Responsible Dog Ownership. A funny, attention grabbing campaign name is always a good idea to engage residents. They prioritised enforcement, with council staff actively engaging with dog walkers and issuing fines where appropriate.



Furthermore, this picture is a good example of the council getting the local community involved. A message is always stronger if it comes from within the community rather than top-down from the authority.

2. Telford Council engaging the community

Telford Council were able to achieve successful prosecutions for dog fouling due to how they had engaged the community. Information was provided to them by members of the public who had been made aware of the issue through council communications.

This is an example of the council working with the community to make residents aware of the problem and to encourage them to report it. Over a 12 month period, the council saw the number of dog fouling reports rise by 36%.

3. Cheshire West and Chester sending officers to hot spots

This approach involved enforcement officers confronting dog owners and asking to see their poo bags. Officers gave away free poo bags to those who needed them and reminded dog walkers that if caught letting their dogs foul, they could face a fine.

4. Bolsover Council's crackdown

A marked increase in fouling incidents was the spur for Bolsover launching their campaign. Again, the approach taken was to increase targeted patrols at problem areas. They have also put a formal PSPO in place which will help give legal backing to enforcement action.

Input from Swindon Borough Council

The parish council has approached SBC to see how they can help tackle dog fouling. At the time of writing, SBC's enforcement officers are considering our request for assistance and the possibility of joint working.

Dog Owner Behaviour

Reducing incidents of dog fouling will require dog owners to change their behaviour. A communications campaign centred on behaviour change therefore offers the best chance of success.

Behaviour change campaigns are often highly resource intensive and cannot rely on one policy alone. To be successful, people must be given real incentives to change.

A [Guardian article](#) from 2023, which reported a survey of dog owners, found that 36% of those surveyed would be more likely to let their dog foul in a rural setting than in an urban one, with 51% being unaware of the damage it does to the environment. Information from the [Forestry Commission](#) supports these findings.

People often rationalise that dog fouling is "less of a problem" in rural areas, even though environmental damage still occurs. This supports the evidence locally that dog fouling is a problem on sports pitches and shared green spaces.

The Forestry Commission reports the following research findings:

- **Convenience:** people let their dogs foul if they deem it inconvenient to pick it up and dispose of it properly.
- **Enforcement:** dog owners will be less motivated to pick up their dog mess if they know there will be no legal consequences.
- **Social norms:** the more dog mess dog owners see, the less likely they will be to pick up their own dog mess because letting their dogs foul is perceived as being the norm.
- **Awareness gaps:** while dog owners know that they should pick up their dog's mess, they do not always think about the real-world consequences of not doing so.

Communications

According to the Government Communication Service (GCS), the key elements of a behaviour change communications campaign are:

- Identifying the specific aim and measurable outcome your campaign wishes to achieve, discouraging merely "raising awareness".
- Using research to understand your audience and the barriers to action in order to construct messages to overcome them.

- Recognising that people are strongly influenced by what others appear to do, and that social influencing – highlighting peer participation and reinforcing social approval – can be a key tool.
- Recognising that behaviour change is a long-term aspiration that depends on something eventually becoming the norm.
- Understanding that when it comes to behaviour change, if structural barriers exist — cost, time, access, infrastructure — messaging may not succeed on its own.

More information about behaviour change best practice from the GCS is attached at **Appendix A**.

A successful behaviour change campaign isn't just about getting attention. It's about shifting real-world actions in order to achieve measurable outcomes.

Seeing a notable improvement will require persistent messaging over a long period of time in order to start the difficult process of turning a non-practiced behaviour into a practiced one.

Proposal

Across the above dog fouling communications case studies, the following themes persist:

- Visible enforcement through patrols, regular checks and CCTV, resulting in a high likelihood of offenders being caught.
- Strong messaging and campaign branding.
- Community engagement – getting local people to take the issue seriously and to report it when they see it.
- Consistency over time (regular patrols, prosecutions and repeated messages).

The parish council does not have the resources in finance or staffing to replicate all of these approaches. But strength of feeling in the parish is such that we could benefit to a significant degree from working collaboratively with the local community, which could, in the long term, produce positive results.

Recommendations

1. To **AGREE** for the Deputy Clerk to draft a full behaviour change communications plan and to bring the plan back to the next meeting of the Community Assets and Open Spaces Committee for approval.

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